THE EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE

REV. B.V. MILLER

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THE EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE

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THE EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE

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THE EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

ALTHOUGH it might not be quite accurate to say that some kind of sacrificial rite forms, or has formed, an element in every one of the great religions without exception, yet it would not be far from the truth. Almost universally man has felt the need of entering into close communication with the divinity, and nearly everywhere he has found that the best way of satisfying this need was by means of sacrifice, whether he wished to appease his god, to offer him the highest kind of worship, to ask him for his protection, or to thank him for his favours.

The offering of sacrifice corresponds with a natural prompting of man's heart under the influence of religion, it satisfies an appetite that is deep and urgent. It would seem strange, therefore, if the perfect religion, the religion that is the fulfilment of the law, the religion that is

intrinsically Catholic, that is, universal, and capable of offering the full satisfaction to all man's needs, everywhere and always, were a religion without a sacrifice. Such a deficiency would need a lot of explaining away before it could be looked upon as other than a defect. Even though it be granted that the Founder and High Priest of this religion offered the perfect sacrifice once for all, it would still seem strange, human nature being what it is, if he had left his followers without any means of renewing this sacrifice, or if he had made no provision whatever for its perpetuation or its constant reiteration.

Happily the suggested deficiency is simply hypothetical. We have the Mass, the proper and perfect sacrifice of the New Law, wherein, in every place, from the rising of the sun to the setting thereof is offered a clean oblation to the Lord, the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

The purpose of these pages is to justify this assertion by setting forth, as simply as possible, the dogmatic arguments on which it rests, and that done, to add a few theological considerations which may help to a better understanding and realization of the meaning of the Mass and of its value as the central act of Catholic worship. Readers must not expect to find here any discussion of the many problems connected with

the history of the Mass. Nor is it my intention to enter into any of the controversies that have raged around the Mass, be they controversies between Catholics and those who reject the Mass, or be they domestic disputes between different schools or parties of Catholic theologians. Again, this is not meant to be a devotional book, though, of course, since all true devotion springs from and rests upon knowledge of the truth, every exposition of Catholic dogma must be fundamentally and potentially devotional. My aim is simply expository, to show that the Mass is a sacrifice, and to set forth what that assertion means and implies.

It might be thought that the first thing necessary in such an essay as this is a rigorous definition of terms; that we ought to determine exactly what constitutes a sacrifice, and then go on to show that the Mass verifies all the conditions required. That is the usual method in any theological treatise, the method consecrated by generations of scholastic theologians. Unfortunately in the present case, if it is a question of an exact definition, it is impossible to find agreement among theologians. To attempt such a definition would be regarded, inevitably and rightly, as begging the question. We must content ourselves, therefore, with a looser notion of sacrifice, for the present, leaving until later a

more rigorous determination of the idea, and for our purpose it will be enough to transcribe what the Rev. M. C. D'Arcy, S.J., has written in Chapter II of the fourteenth volume of this series: "And so now we can enlarge the idea of sacrifice by saying that it is an act of homage which furthers union with God, one's Maker and Last End; and the way that this is done is through the offering of a gift which symbolizes interior oblation, and perhaps repentance as well. The gift is sanctified and made holy with God's holiness, since it passes into his possession, if it is accepted by God. His acceptance passes, so to speak, through the gift to the offerer, and the alliance or friendship is ratified by the eating, not by God, but by the worshipper, of what is holy with God's holiness. Sacrifice has thus shown itself as a mode of mediation between God and man."

CHAPTER II

THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS IN THE SACRED SCRIPTURES

WHATEVER else the Mass may be, it is the commemoration and the repetition of the Last Supper. It is the perpetual fulfilment of the command given by Jesus Christ to his Apostles, and through them, to all his priests until the end of time: "Do this in commemoration of me." As to this, there is agreement, I think, among practically all who claim to be Christians. Hence, it is with the Last Supper that we must begin, and if it prove that this has a sacrificial character it will at once follow that the Mass also must be looked upon as a sacrifice.

Only one thing needs to be noted by way of introduction, namely that the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence and all that it implies, must here be taken for granted. All this will be found in the volume on *The Sacrament of the Eucharist,* wherein also it is made clear that the passages from the Scriptures now to be considered must be understood in their obvious, literal, and realistic sense.

In the accounts of the Last Supper left us by the Evangelists and St Paul two or three things stand out clearly.

In the first place we cannot but be struck by the sacrificial nature and connotations of the language used. Jesus and his Apostles were Jews; all the circumstances accompanying the solemn institution of the covenant between God and the Hebrew people were well known to them, the words in which it is recorded were often read by them or heard in their worship in synagogue and temple. In the Book of Exodus it is written: "And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord: and rising in the morning he built an altar at the foot of the mount, and twelve titles according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, and they offered holocausts, and sacrificed pacific victims of calves to the Lord. Then Moses took half of the blood, and put it into bowls; and the rest he poured upon the altar. And taking the book of the covenant, he read it in the hearing of the people . . . and he took the blood and sprinkled it upon the people, and he said: This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words."[1] When, therefore, Jesus, giving his Disciples the chalice, said: "Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood of

[1] xxiv, 4-8.

the new testament"[1] (or "covenant" as the Greek word may equally well be rendered), it is impossible to doubt that the Disciples must have recalled the scene described in Exodus, and realized that Jesus was instituting and sealing the new covenant between God and his people of which the old had been but the type and the promise. And as the old covenant had been sealed in the blood of victims offered in sacrifice, so it is clear that the sealing blood of the new is that of the victim who is the sacrifice of the new covenant. The sacrificial character of this blood is still further emphasized by the added words: "which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins," which proclaim the propitiatory effect of Christ's death. Even if it be granted that Jesus, in these words, was alluding directly and primarily to his approaching death upon the Cross, as to which commentators have disputed endlessly, it still remains true that the Supper itself partook of the nature of a sacrifice since Christ's true body and blood were there really present and really given, and were the immediate subject of his sacrificial words.

Another point to be noticed is the connection or relation set up between the Supper and the Cross. The simplest and most direct way of

[1] Matt. xxvi, 27, 28.

showing this is to transcribe the texts as they stand. They speak for themselves.

The Body: "This is my body which is given for you. Do this for a commemoration of me."[1] St Paul[2] has, "broken for you."

The Blood: "This is my blood of the new testament which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins."[3] St Mark[4] leaves out the words, "unto remission of sins." St Luke[5] puts the same thing in a slightly different form: "This is the chalice, the new testament in my blood, which shall be shed for you," and St Paul: "This chalice is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of me,"[6] and he adds his own comment, embracing both body and blood in one sweeping phrase: "For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall shew (*i.e.* proclaim or celebrate, as his word really means) the death of the Lord, until he come."[7]

Nothing could be plainer. In a few hours Jesus was to be delivered to death and was to shed his blood for men unto the forgiveness of their sins; and now in this last solemn and loving meal with his Disciples, he wishes, by an act of divinely conceived anticipation, to give them

[1] Luke xxii, 19. [2] 1 Cor. xi, 24. [3] Matt. xxvi, 28.
[4] xiv, 24. [5] xxii, 20. [6] 1 Cor. xi, 25. [7] *Ibid.*, 26.

his body and blood, and to make them partakers in the sacrifice so close at hand.

We must not leave this point without noting that, according to the Greek text, the phrase "which shall be shed" would run "which is shed," for the verbal form used is the present participle. This reading, while possibly rendering the allusion to the Cross less direct, would, on the other hand, only emphasize and strengthen the actual and present sacrificial meaning and implication of Christ's words.

Lastly, in the Supper there is found that element which was an integral, if not an essential part of nearly all the ancient sacrifices of Jews and Gentiles alike, to wit, the sacrificial meal, of which, after the oblation was made, all those who had assisted at the sacred rite partook, eating and drinking of the gifts that had been offered. We need not now enquire into the various ideas that lay behind and prompted this custom. It is enough to remark that it existed almost universally, and that it has its place in the Last Supper: "Take ye and eat, this is my body; take ye and drink, this is my blood of the new testament." It is St Paul who gives the clearest expression to this sacrificial element in the Last Supper, or rather, to its repetition in the Eucharistic celebration in the Church: "The chalice of benediction, which we bless, is it not

the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord? . . . Behold Israel according to the flesh; are not they that eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What then? Do I say that what is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything? Or that the idol is anything? But the things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God. And I would not that you should be made partakers with devils. You cannot drink the chalice of the Lord, and the chalice of devils; you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord, and of the table of devils."[1] His argument is clear, and its implication manifest. The Jews partake of the altar, and the heathens partake with devils, when they eat of the things which have been sacrificed on the altar or sacrificed to devils. Similarly if the Christians are partakers of the blood of Christ and of his body, as St Paul says they are, this can only be so because, in drinking and eating of them, they share in the sacrifice in which they are offered upon the table of the Lord. Exclude this idea of sharing in the sacrificial gifts, and his words have no application to the case under consideration, and his argument, which he puts forward as conclusive, loses all its force.

[1] 1 Cor. x, 16-21.

We have then these three points or elements in the Last Supper as celebrated by Jesus Christ, and in its Eucharistic repetition in the Church; firstly, it is the setting up of a new covenant with God's people, expressed in terms that are clearly sacrificial; secondly, it is the commemoration or memorial of Christ's sacrificial death on the Cross; thirdly, it provides a sacrificial meal wherein we partake of the gifts that have been offered in sacrifice. The conclusion is inevitable that it is a real sacrifice, and, given the truth of the doctrine of the Real Presence, that it is the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

Passing over Hebrews xiii, 10, which, if it refers to the Eucharist (which is a disputed point), is decisive as to its sacrificial character, we must not omit some consideration of the well-known prophecy of Malachy, which, from the earliest times, has been understood by Christian writers to be a clear foretelling of the sacrifice of the Mass. A full discussion of this passage must be sought elsewhere; here only an outline of the argument can be given.

The Prophet begins, after a short exordium, by reproving the priests of Israel for their neglect of God's commands in the matter of divine worship, by offering unclean and defective gifts upon the altar of sacrifice. God, through the Prophet's mouth, declares that he will no longer

look with favour upon their sacrifices, and announces that the time cometh when, instead of these defective sacrifices offered at Jerusalem only, a clean oblation will be offered constantly and in every place unto his name. "For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation; for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts." [1]

This clean oblation that is to be offered everywhere among the Gentiles is evidently something different from the Jewish sacrifices, which could be offered nowhere but in the Temple at Jerusalem, and which, since this was destroyed, have not been offered anywhere. Nor can it be understood simply of the sacrifices of prayer and praise and thanksgiving which all worshippers of God offer continually to the Lord. This sense is incompatible both with the context, which throughout refers to real, material sacrifices only, and with the meaning of the words used. The Hebrew word *mincha*, which is translated *oblation*, nearly always has in the Old Testament the specific signification of unbloody sacrifice, and, though occasionally meaning any sort of real sacrifice, is never used to signify interior acts of worship or such exterior oblations as are

[1] Mal. i, 11.

not real sacrifices;[1] and this may be said also of the other terms employed.

The Prophet announces the coming abrogation of the old rites and the institution of a new and universal sacrifice. His hearers, of course, could not understand the full meaning of his words, but ever since the days of the Apostles, Christian writers have been unanimous in interpreting them as a reference to the sacrifice of the Mass. The Council of Trent authoritatively confirmed this interpretation in its decree upon the sacrifice of the Mass: "And this indeed is that clean oblation which cannot be defiled by any unworthiness or wickedness in those who offer; the clean oblation which the Lord, speaking by Malachy, foretold would be offered in every place to his name, which would be great among the Gentiles."[2]

Finally, something must be said of the argument to be drawn from Christ's priesthood "according to the order of Melchisedech."[3] The argument, as repeated in dozens of theological textbooks, may be thus briefly set down. Priesthood and sacrifice are correlative; priests of the same order must offer sacrifice according to the same rite. Melchisedech offered sacrifice in bread and wine, therefore so did Christ. But the only

[1] *Cfr.* Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew Lexicon*, s.v.
[2] Session xxii, Chap. i. [3] Ps. cix. Heb. vii.

time he can possibly be said to have done this was at the Last Supper, and therefore the Eucharist is a sacrifice.

Intrinsically and as a purely scriptural argument this may seem to be defective. The Greek word translated "order" refers rather to rank, quality, manner, than to the sacrificial rite. To this no reference seems to be made either in the Psalm or in the Epistle; in the latter the writer is wholly occupied with the eternity and superiority of Christ's priesthood as compared with that of Aaron. This he illustrates and explains by saying that Christ is "a priest according to the order of Melchisedech." The King of Salem is shown to be Abraham's superior by receiving from him the tribute of tenths; he is the type of the eternity of Christ's priesthood by his manner of appearing in the pages of Scripture, "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life," and therefore he is "likened unto the Son of God (and) continueth priest for ever."[1] Hence those who are content with the purely objective and apparently obvious interpretation of Scripture may reject this argument. But the Catholic has another criterion; for him the Church is the only authoritative interpreter of Holy Writ, and her voice speaks

[1] Heb. vii, 3.

in the constant tradition of her Fathers and Doctors. Looked at in this light the words under review appear as a convincing proof of the sacrificial character of the Last Supper, for, from the beginning of the second century onwards, hardly a Christian writer quotes them without seeing in them a reference to Christ's institution of the Eucharist and a demonstration of the sacrificial character of the Mass. As Petavius puts it: "On this point the ancient writers agree to such an incredible extent, that there can be no room for legitimate doubt in the mind of any Christian."[1]

[1] *De Incarnatione*, Bk. 12, Ch. 12.

CHAPTER III

THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS IN CATHOLIC TRADITION

JUST as the religious life of the Jews had its centre in the temple at Jerusalem, because there alone were offered the sacrifices that commemorated the institution of the Covenant and the deliverance from bondage, so the religious life of Christians revolves about the Mass, because it is the commemoration and the perpetual reiteration of Christ's death on the Cross, their deliverance and redemption. It would, then, be remarkable if the Mass had not left a deep impress on the whole of Christian literature, especially on those parts of it that bear upon the practical life of the Church. It must, however, be borne in mind that we possess to-day but comparatively scanty remains of what must have been the abundant output of Christian writers who lived before the middle of the third century, and much of what we have is of such a character as to make any allusion to the details of worship most improbable. Enough, however, is left to enable us to ascertain with certainty the

mind and teaching of the primitive Church. From towards the end of the third century the extant testimony of Christian writers is both abundant and detailed. It would be impossible for us to give a hundredth part of the harvest to be garnered from the patristic writers of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries; nor would it serve any useful purpose, for all competent scholars are agreed that from the end of the third century the Catholic theology of the Mass was fixed as regards its substantial elements, and that, on all sides, it was held to be the true and real sacrifice of Christ's body and blood.

Yet it is maintained by many that this is a perversion of the primitive doctrine, and the principal author of the innovation and of the change in the current of theological tradition is said to be St Cyprian. Until his time, we are told, the eucharistic sacrifice was considered to be simply a spiritual sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, containing no real and objective offering; or at the most, the offering was merely one of bread and wine. He introduced the idea of the sacrifice of Christ's body and blood, and his influence was so powerful that, in a comparatively short time, the old teaching was forgotten and the Church was definitely committed to the new line of eucharistic speculation. We shall begin, therefore, with an examination of St

Cyprian's teaching. Then, working backwards, we hope to be able to make it clear that, instead of being an innovator, he was a continuator, that he added nothing to the accepted doctrine and did not change the current of theological teaching, but only stated clearly some things that others had said obscurely, and made some things explicit that had always been implicitly believed.

St Cyprian's writings are full of references to the eucharistic sacrifice, but as a rule they are incidental allusions only or passing references which, though couched in most realistic language, might possibly be interpreted in a metaphorical sense or are not sufficiently clear to enable us to discover with certainty their full significance. We have, however, one of his letters wherein he sets out his teaching in considerable detail.[1] A certain bishop, Caecilius, had informed him that, in some places in Africa, the custom had grown up of using water only in the chalice in the celebration of the Eucharist, and sought his opinion and advice in the matter. From St Cyprian's lengthy answer we extract a few of the more telling passages. "Jesus Christ our Lord and God, who instituted this sacrifice."[2] "Nor can his blood, which is our redemption

[1] Epistola LXIII, *Ad Caecilium;* Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, IV, 383 ff. [2] Ch. i.

and our life, be discerned in the chalice, when the chalice lacks wine." [1] "For who is more truly the priest of the most high God than our Lord Jesus Christ, who offered sacrifice to God the Father, and offered the same as Melchisedech had offered, that is bread and wine, to wit his body and blood?" [2] "Whence it appears that the blood of Christ is not offered if there be not wine in the chalice, nor is the Lord's sacrifice celebrated rightly and holily unless our oblation and sacrifice correspond with Christ's passion." [3] "Therefore, dearest brother, let no one think that he ought to follow the custom of those who have thought that water alone should be offered in the chalice of the Lord. The question is, whom have these followed? For if in the sacrifice that Christ offered, Christ alone is to be followed, then indeed we must do what Christ did, and obey his command as to what should be done. . . . And if we are not allowed to depart from the least of the Lord's commands, so much the less is it allowable to infringe his commands in things so high and great, in a matter so closely touching the very sacrament of the Lord's passion and our redemption. . . . For if Jesus . . . himself is the high priest of God the Father, and if he, in the first place, offered himself as

[1] Ch. ii. [2] Ch. iv. [3] Ch. ix.

a sacrifice to the Father, and then commanded this to be done in commemoration of him, then, in truth, that priest truly acts as Christ's minister who imitates what Christ did, and he then offers a true and full sacrifice in the church to God the Father, when he offers according as he sees Christ to have offered."[1] "And since we make mention of his passion whenever we offer sacrifice" (for the sacrifice we offer is the Lord's passion), "we must do nothing else but what he did."[2]

St Cyprian, then, holds that the Eucharist is a true and real sacrifice, that it was instituted and first offered by Jesus Christ at the Last Supper, and that in it we truly offer to God Christ's body and blood under the appearances of bread and wine, and that it is the passion or the commemoration of the passion of Christ. Such was the doctrine taught in Carthage in the middle of the third century, and no theologian of the present day teaches anything different. But was it new doctrine in St Cyprian's day?

Let us interrogate Tertullian, the fiery Christian apologist who flourished in Carthage forty years or so before St Cyprian, and who, after having been the foremost champion of the Church, drifted into the heresy of Montanism,

[1] Ch. xiv. [2] Ch. xvii.

and died no one knows how or when. In his writings, whether Catholic or Montanist, there is no such formal and direct treatment of the eucharistic sacrifice as is provided by St Cyprian, but allusions both to the sacrament and the sacrifice abound, and are nearly always couched in realistic terms that can leave no doubt in the impartial reader's mind as to the writer's underlying belief.

Here is his approving estimate of the conduct of pious Christian women: "You do not make the round of the temples, or frequent the games, or take part in the festival days of the Gentiles. For it is because of these assemblies and the wish to see and be seen that all kinds of vanities are publicly paraded; . . . but you go abroad only for some serious (or holy, *tetrica*) reason; either because some sick person among the brethren is to be visited, or because sacrifice is offered, or the word of God administered."[1] Here is the word: "sacrifice is offered"; there is no explanation; the Christian woman would understand.

But the modern non-Catholic scholar often does not or will not see what Tertullian means. To show that the African apologist had no notion of an objective and real eucharistic sacrifice, he seizes on the following few words from

[1] *De cultu Feminarum*, II, 11 (*Patr. Lat.*, I, 1444-5).

the treatise *Against Marcion*, III, 22: "In every place a sacrifice is offered to my name, a clean sacrifice [1] that is the proclaiming of his glory, and blessings, and praises and hymns." [2] But the conclusion is unwarranted. Tertullian's interpretation of this prophecy is not meant to be either exclusive or comprehensive. He is making a particular point against Marcion and, as is his wont, gathers together all the texts he can find that can be brought to bear on it. That the eucharistic sacrifice consisted in something more than the singing of hymns and the praises of God is clear from what he says about the things that women were not allowed to do in church. "Let us see whether those things that ecclesiastical discipline prescribes concerning women are applicable to virgins. It is not allowed to a woman to speak in church, but neither to teach, nor to baptize, nor to offer (*i.e.* sacrifice), nor to claim a part in any man's duty, much less to share the duty of the priestly office." [3] But they were certainly allowed to join in the prayers and hymns. To offer (*offerre*), then, is something more than the giving of thanks and singing of hymns; it was a function strictly reserved to priests, whose

[1] Mal. i, 11. [2] *Patr. Lat.*, II, 381.
[3] De Virginibus Velandis (*Patr. Lat.*, II, 950).

duty it was to preside at the meetings where the Eucharist was celebrated.

We find many allusions to the traditional custom of celebrating the Eucharist for the dead and in honour of the martyrs, on their anniversaries, and always Tertullian's language is most definitely sacrificial. Passing over these, we must consider in some detail an illuminating passage from the *De Pudicitia:*[1] "And so the apostate will recover his former garment, being clothed again in the Holy Ghost, he will receive again the ring, the seal of baptism, and once more Christ will be slain for him." These are the relevant words and, if the allusion is really to the eucharistic sacrifice, they are clear evidence that Tertullian regarded it as, in some way, the reiteration of Christ's death. This allusion is, however, disputed, it being alleged that the reference is to Hebrews vi, 6, "crucifying again to themselves the Son of God."

This treatise is one of Tertullian's violent Montanist writings, in which he attacks the Pope for having made it known that all sorts of sinners, even those who had apostatized, might be reconciled to the Church after doing penance. Catholics, supporting the Pope, appealed to the parable of the prodigal son as a supreme and unanswerable argument. The

[1] Chap. ix, *Patr. Lat.*, II, 1049.

question now in dispute is, therefore, the interpretation of the parable, for Tertullian recognizes that, if it be understood to refer to the fallen Christian, his own case is hopeless. So he uses all his power as a rhetorical debater to show that it can only be applied to the heathen who, having wandered far from God, and spent his substance in riotous living in the darkness and corruption of paganism, comes back to the Father and is received by him in Baptism. "He remembers God his Father, having made satisfaction he returns, he receives his former garment, namely that state which Adam lost by his transgression; likewise then he receives the first ring, by which, after being interrogated, he seals the compact of faith,[1] and so finally is feasted with the fatness of the Body of the Lord, namely, the Eucharist."

Here we have the key to the meaning of the words in dispute. Tertullian understands the welcome given by the prodigal's father to his son as being realized in the two sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, but will not allow that the parable can apply to the penitent apostate, for, if it does, the consequences will be absurd, because "not only adulterers and fornicators, but idolators and blasphemers and

[1] This refers to the questions put to the catechumen at baptism.

deniers of Christ, and every kind of apostate will be able to make satisfaction to the Father if the parable be so interpreted. And in this way the whole substance of religion is really destroyed. For who will fear to waste what he can afterwards get back? Who will take the trouble to keep for ever what he cannot lose for ever? Safety in sinning means to lust after sin. And so the apostate will recover his former garment, being clothed again in the Holy Ghost; he will receive again the ring, the seal of Baptism, and again Christ will be slain for him, and he will once more sit upon that seat from which those who are unworthily garbed, to say nothing of the naked, are taken by the torturers and cast out into darkness."

It is clear that, in this passage also, which runs on the same lines as the former, Tertullian is referring to the same two sacraments, Baptism and the Eucharist, and that he envisages the latter both as a sacrifice and a banquet. He regarded the Eucharist, therefore, as a sacrifice, which was offered upon the altar (*altare, ara*) of the Lord, by priests (*sacerdotes*), the victim being Christ, and the faithful partaking of his body.

St. Irenæus, who witnesses to the tradition of both East and West, sets forth the same teaching at the end of the second century. He

even takes the reality of the eucharistic sacrifice as the starting-point of his argument against the heretics, that is, as common ground between himself and them. As we have not the space to quote him at any length, and any other sort of quotation is unsatisfactory, we may refer the reader to his *Adversus Hæreses,* Book IV, Chapters xvii and xviii, and pass on at once to St Justin.

His testimony is interesting chiefly by reason of the account he gives of the way the Christians carried out their liturgical worship at Rome in the middle of the second century. This is the earliest description we have of the Mass, for before this time, Christian literature contains nothing but passing, and often obscure references. Though St Justin's account be well known, it will bear quotation here, for in it we can discover many of the elements of the liturgy which have remained substantially the same from his day until now. It is to be found in Chapters lxv to lxvii of his first Apology, and runs thus:

"We salute one another with a kiss when we have concluded the prayers. Then is brought to the president of the brethren bread, and a cup of water and wine, which he receives; and offers up praise and glory to the Father of all things, through the name of His Son and of

the Holy Ghost; and he returns thanks at length, for our being vouchsafed these things by him. When he has concluded the prayers and thanksgiving, all the people who are present express their assent by saying *Amen*. This word *Amen* in the Aramaic language means 'so be it'; and when the president has celebrated the Eucharist, and all the people have assented, they whom we call deacons give to each of those who are present a portion of the eucharistic bread and wine and water; and carry them to those who are absent. And this food is called by us the Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake unless he believes the truth of our doctrines; and unless he has been washed in the laver for the forgiveness of sins, and unto regeneration; and so lives as Christ has directed. For we do not receive them as ordinary food, or ordinary drink; but as by the Word of God Jesus our Saviour was made flesh, and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so also the food which was blessed by the prayer of the Word which proceeded from him, and from which our flesh and blood, by assimilation, receives nourishment, is, we are taught, both the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the apostles in the records which they made, and which are called gospels, have declared that Jesus com-

manded them to do as follows: 'He took bread and gave thanks, and said, "This do in remembrance of me: this is my body." And in like manner he took the cup, and blessed it, and said, "This is my blood," and gave it to them alone.'"

This is Justin's account of the celebration of the Eucharist on the occasion of the baptism of neophytes. A little further on he speaks in a similar way but more briefly of the ordinary Sunday celebration in town or country. But as this introduces no new element, beyond the mention of the sermon, we need not quote it.

The reader will have noticed that in the passage quoted there is not a word about sacrifice, and may, therefore, wonder why it has been given. Apart from its historical and liturgical interest as the first account of the Mass, it has two points of dogmatic importance. The first is the evident connection between the Christian Eucharist and the Last Supper, since St Justin explains the one by the other and by Christ's command to his Apostles to repeat what he did. The second point is the witness to the Christian belief in the Real Presence. The eucharistic bread and wine were, for St Justin and his fellow-Christians, not common food and drink, but, quite simply, the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. Even though many

have written much to prove that Justin could not possibly have believed in Transubstantiation, his simple, straightforward profession of faith in the Real Presence cannot be gainsaid. We must bear this in mind in reading the following passages from his other work, the *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew.*

The most notable and important is in Chapter xli, where we can clearly discern the theme of the thanksgivings offered by the celebrant, referred to in the Apology, which are now fixed in our present Prefaces. "And the offering of meal, which it was prescribed to make for lepers who had been cleansed, was the type of the bread of the Eucharist, which Jesus Christ our Lord taught us to offer in memory of the sufferings he underwent for the cleansing of men's souls from all iniquity; so that we may give thanks to God for having created the world for us, and all things in it, for having delivered us from the evils that oppressed us, for having completely destroyed the principalities and powers, by him who was made the Suffering One according to his will.

"Also concerning the sacrifices which you were wont to offer to him, God says, as I have mentioned already, by the mouth of Malachy, one of the twelve: 'My will is not in you, saith the Lord, and your sacrifices I shall not accept

from your hands. Therefore from the sun's rising unto its going down, my name is glorified among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, a clean sacrifice, for great is my name among the nations, says the Lord, while you profane it.' But of the sacrifices offered to him in every place by us, the nations, the sacrifices, that is to say, of the bread of the Eucharist, and likewise of the cup of the Eucharist, of these he foretells when he says that we glorify his name, but you profane it."

Similar passages occur in Chapters lxx and cxvii of the same book, and also elsewhere, which, taken together, make it clear that Justin looked upon the celebration of the Holy Eucharist as a real sacrifice, wherein are offered bread and wine which, however, are not common bread and wine, but the Body and Blood of Christ, of whose sufferings and death this sacrifice is a memorial or commemoration.

Previous to St Justin we find but brief and, generally, casual allusions to the Eucharist as for example, in St Clement's *Letter to the Corinthians*[1] and the *Letters of St Ignatius to the Ephesians*[2] and the *Philadelphians*,[3] and finally, in the very early document, of uncertain authorship and date, known as *The Teach-*

[1] Chs. xl and xliv. [2] Ch. v. [3] Ch. iv.

ing of the Apostles.[1] Though nothing very definite is to be gathered from these scattered allusions, they yet all point the same way. There is not only no sign of any purely commemorative and non-sacrificial conception of the Eucharist, but there are positive indications that its celebration was always looked upon as a sacrificial act fulfilling the prophecy of Malachy. We know also that, from the first, the Christians believed the consecrated bread and wine to be Christ's real Body and Blood.[2] But we cannot separate these two ideas; they are the two indivisible elements of the one doctrine that the Mass is the true sacrifice of Jesus Christ's real Body and Blood. We may allow that there has been some development from Clement through Justin to Cyprian, but it has been logical and inevitable, and consisting rather in the clearer explication and coordination of these two primitive elements than in the addition of anything new, or the introduction of anything from without.

[1] Chs. xiv-xv.

[2] *Vide The Sacrament of the Eucharist*, Rev. G. D. Smith, D.D.

CHAPTER IV

THE ATTACK UPON THE MASS

THERE has never been a time when the Church has been untroubled by heresies. They began to spring up before the Apostles were dead, and, in one place or another, new ones have been constantly arising ever since. And just as heresy has been universal from the point of view of time, so it has been impartial in the doctrines chosen for attack, though it is true that some periods have been specially noteworthy for heresies concerning Christ, others for false teachings about the Trinity, others, again, for attacks upon the Papacy, or the Sacraments, or the nature and attributes of God. We have seen some indications of a eucharistic heresy in St Cyprian's time; the Mass was the object of attack by the Albigenses in the twelfth century and again by some of Wyclif's followers two hundred years later. But the great onslaught upon it was launched by the Protestant sects in the sixteenth century. Although the Mass was not singled out as a thing to be destroyed from the first, it was

soon seen that there was no room for it in Protestantism, and that, if the religious revolt were to make headway and have any logical justification at all, the sacrifice of the Mass must be utterly abolished. No heresy can be logical all through, from beginning to end. That is the exclusive privilege of the true faith. But no heresy can be altogether illogical and have any chance of life, especially in an age, such as was the sixteenth century, when the power of clean, straight thinking is still both strong and common. Therefore, when once the Protestant leaders had adopted the doctrine of justification by faith only, and had thrown over the reality of sanctifying grace as the supernatural life of the soul, there was nothing for it except to give up belief in operative and grace-producing sacraments. So the Real Presence and Transubstantiation had to go, and the Eucharist had to lose altogether its sacrificial character and be retained simply as a memorial of the Last Supper whereby the soul is moved to prayer and enabled in some way to enter into communion with and to receive Jesus Christ. There were also other reasons, less respectable than the claims of logical consistency, but into which we need not go, which prompted the Reformers to abolish the Mass. Hence it is not surprising that, to a great

extent, belief in the Mass became the touchstone of Catholic orthodoxy and that all through the subsequent centuries of controversy with Protestantism, Catholic theologians should have used all their powers of argument and all their resources of learning in its defence. It was natural too that the Council of Trent should give to this question the most careful and minute consideration, focussing upon it the attention of the most brilliant gathering of theologians the world has seen, and debating every point with the greatest possible thoroughness and acuteness. The decrees and definitions drawn up as the outcome of the Council's deliberations not only form the Catholic's rule of faith in this matter, but may be taken as the foundation and starting-point of all subsequent theological speculation. They are the test by which any theory must be tried, and they are so important, so full and so carefully drawn that they deserve to be quoted at length.

The translation here given is taken from *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Œcumenical Council of Trent, translated by the Rev. J. Waterworth,* published in 1848. If it cannot lay claim to elegance it has the great merit of being faithful to the original, and, indeed, is as near to being a literal rendering

as is possible in readable English. These decrees and definitions were approved during the twenty-second session of the Council held in September 1532.

"Chapter I.—On the institution of the most holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Forasmuch as, under the former Testament, according to the testimony of the Apostle Paul, there was no perfection, because of the weakness of the Levitical priesthood; there was need, God, the Father of mercies, so ordaining, that another priest should rise, according to the order of Melchisedech, our Lord Jesus Christ, who might consummate, and lead to what is perfect as many as were to be sanctified. He, therefore, our God and Lord, though he was about to offer himself once on the altar of the cross unto God the Father, by means of his death, there to operate an eternal redemption; nevertheless, because that his priesthood was not be to extinguished by his death, in the Last Supper, on the night in which he was betrayed—that he might leave to his own beloved spouse the Church, a visible sacrifice, such as the nature of man requires, whereby that bloody sacrifice, once to be accomplished on the cross, might be represented, and the memory thereof remain even unto the end of the world, and its salutary virtue be applied to the remission of these sins

which we daily commit—declaring himself constituted a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech, he offered up to God the Father his own body and blood under the species of bread and wine; and, under the symbols of those same things, he delivered (his own body and blood) to be received by his Apostles, whom he then constituted priests of the New Testament; and by those words, 'Do this in commemoration of me,' he commanded them and their successors in the priesthood, to offer (them); even as the Catholic Church has always understood and taught. For, having celebrated the ancient Passover, which the multitude of the children of Israel immolated in memory of their going out of Egypt, he instituted the new Passover (to wit), himself to be immolated, under visible signs, by the Church through (the ministry of) priests, in memory of his own passage from this world unto the Father, when by the effusion of his own blood he redeemed us, and delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into his kingdom. And this is indeed that clean oblation, which cannot be defiled by any unworthiness, or malice of those that offer (it); which the Lord foretold by Malachias was to be offered in every place, clean to his name, which was to be great among the Gentiles; and

which the Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, has not obscurely indicated, when he says, that they who are defiled by the participation of the table of devils, cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord; by the table, meaning in both places the altar. This, in fine, is that oblation which was prefigured by various types of sacrifices, during the period of nature, and of the law; inasmuch as it comprises all the good things signified by those sacrifices, as being the consummation and perfection of them all.

"Chapter II.—That the sacrifice of the Mass is propitiatory both for the living and the dead.

"And forasmuch as, in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, that same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner, who once offered himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross; the holy Synod teaches, that this sacrifice is truly propitiatory and that by means thereof this is effected, that we obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid, if we draw nigh unto God, contrite and penitent, with a sincere heart and upright faith, with fear and reverence. For the Lord, appeased by the oblation thereof, and granting the grace and gift of penitence, forgives even heinous crimes and sins. For the victim is one and the same, the same now offer-

ing by the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross, the manner alone of offering being different. The fruits indeed of which oblation, of that bloody one to wit, are received most plentifully through this unbloody one; so far is this (latter) from derogating in any way from that (former oblation). Wherefore, not only for the sins, punishments, satisfactions and other necessities of the faithful who are living, but also for those who are departed in Christ, and who are not as yet fully purified, is it rightly offered, agreeably to a tradition of the apostles."

Passing over the other chapters as less important to our present purpose, we transcribe the following canons wherein the Protestant errors are condemned.

"Canon i.—If any one saith, that in the Mass a true and proper sacrifice is not offered to God; or, that to be offered is nothing else but that Christ is given us to eat; let him be anathema.

"Canon ii.—If any one saith, that by those words, Do this for a commemoration of me, Christ did not institute the apostles priests; or did not ordain that they and other priests should offer his own body and blood; let him be anathema.

"Canon iii.—If any one saith, that the sac-

rifice of the Mass is only a sacrifice of praise and of thanksgiving; or that it is a bare commemoration of the sacrifice consummated on the cross, but not a propitiatory sacrifice; or, that it profits him only who receives; and that it ought not to be offered for the living and the dead for sins, pains, satisfactions and other necessities; let him be anathema.

"Canon iv.—If any one saith, that, by the sacrifice of the Mass a blasphemy is cast upon the most holy sacrifice of Christ consummated on the cross; or, that it is thereby derogated from; let him be anathema."

These decrees and canons contain the whole of the Church's defined, dogmatic teaching on the sacrifice of the Mass. No one can be a Catholic who knowingly denies any of the doctrinal points here made, and in later chapters we shall have something to say of each of them. But a careful reading will at once show that they do not answer all the questions that occur to the mind, and that they, by no means, shut the door upon theological speculation. Indeed, the centuries that have passed since the Council was held have been remarkable for the amount, the variety, the intensity and the liveliness of Catholic theological speculation upon the Mass. From this point of view we may divide the time roughly into two periods.

In the first, immediately succeeding the Council, the theologians were moved mainly by defensive and controversial reasons, and had their eyes always fixed upon the necessities of the anti-Protestant campaign; whereas in the second and present period, which has begun only in comparatively recent years, the interest of the theologians has coincided with the wonderful modern revival of eucharistic devotion, and the mainspring of their speculations is their desire to increase and more solidly to establish that devotion by giving the faithful a better and deeper knowledge of and insight into the mystery of the Mass.

Yet in both periods, the chief matter of debate is the same, in spite of the diversity of motive. For the Council of Trent, while clear and definite in its statement that the Mass is a true and real and propitiatory sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ, makes no attempt to prove it except by arguments drawn directly from authority and revelation. This mode of procedure is traditional with the Councils of the Church which are, as regards their authoritative decrees, teaching bodies and not theological debating societies. The lengthy and minute debates that precede the final casting and conciliar approval of the decrees are in the nature of private discussions, having no

authority beyond that of the theologians taking part in them. Hence it is left to the theologians to find a rational justification of the dogmas defined, to give exact definitions of the terms employed and to work out scientific proofs of the doctrines, in so far forth as these are capable of being thus proved. In the present case the question to be settled is, how exactly is the Mass a sacrifice, in what way and in what particular action does the Mass verify the definition and fulfil all the necessary conditions of a real, propitiatory sacrifice?

In the next chapter we shall set forth briefly some few of the many ways in which theologians have tried to answer this question.

CHAPTER V

THEOLOGICAL THEORIES AND SPECULATIONS

It is impossible to give more than a sketch of three or four of the principal theories about the way in which the Mass verifies the definition of a sacrifice, which have at various times found favour with Catholic theologians of repute. Moreover, in a matter of such difficulty, which is the subject of such lively debate, it would not be seemly in such a volume as this, for the writer to put forward any theory as definitely preferable to all others, whatever may be his own opinions or convictions in the matter. He may, however, be allowed to state the objections which seem fatal to some theories, and which, in the course of time, have caused them to be abandoned by practically all theologians to-day.

The first difference of opinion to be noted refers to the part of the Mass wherein lies the essential element of sacrifice. According to some it is contained wholly within the consecration, others have thought that it consists in the consecration together with the com-

munion, while a few have gone so far as to look upon the communion alone as the sacrificial act. It is hardly necessary to discuss this last point, since it is agreed by practically all theologians to-day that, although the communion belongs to the integrity or completeness of the sacrificial rite, it does not form part of the essential sacrificial act. In other words, although Christ's body and blood are offered in sacrifice, in order that they may be afterwards partaken of by the faithful, or by the priest alone, in a sacrificial banquet of communion with God, and although sacrifice and banquet are two parts of one liturgical rite, yet they are two separate acts, differing from one another, not only by the separation of time, but also by a difference of nature.

Without going further into this, and taking it as settled that, in the Mass, it is the twofold consecration and transubstantiation of the bread and wine which alone constitute the essential act of the sacrifice, we go on to look at some of the theories put forward to show how this is so.

The line of argument adopted by many theologians runs somewhat in this way. In any real sacrifice the victim or thing offered suffers some kind of destruction. So the animals offered under the Jewish law were killed, the libations of wine were poured out upon the ground, thus being

rendered unfit for consumption and undergoing practical destruction, the fruits of the earth were either burned or set aside and not devoted to common use, thus being given over to what may be said to be equivalent to destruction. But in the Mass there is a real sacrifice of Christ's body and blood. Therefore there must be some kind of destruction of Christ's body and blood. It is abundantly clear that Christ cannot suffer any real death or destruction in the Mass, and so the theologians' efforts were wholly given to showing that he undergoes something more or less equivalent to a sort of destruction.

It was pointed out, for example, that transubstantiation puts him upon the altar in the form of food and drink destined for consumption, which almost amounts to destruction. Again the suggestion was made that, in the consecrated elements, Jesus Christ, though indeed really and wholly present as living man and God, is yet living a special kind of life which is on a lower plane than his glorious life in heaven, and in which he is deprived of the natural exercise of his human, physical faculties; and this condition of reduced existence may be said to be equivalent to destruction, since it is the utmost limit to which he can go in this direction.

Although these theories are quite orthodox and may be defended, there are few to uphold

them to-day. The first great objection against them springs from a common-sense idea of the value of words. It is seen and recognized that the processes or conditions mentioned cannot be said to constitute a destruction or anything equivalent thereto, except by an abuse of terms which robs them of any real value and is dangerous to true thinking.

A second objection goes deeper. These explanations rest upon the presupposition that transubstantiation is an action that, somehow or other, affects Christ, does something to him. But the best theological thought of the Church, the "classical theology" of St Thomas Aquinas, will not allow this, holding, instead, that the process or action of transubstantiation touches and affects only the substances of bread and wine, Christ's body and blood being simply the finishing point of the process, and remaining in themselves wholly unchanged and unaffected.

Under the force of these objections and others which we need not set down, a more refined and subtle variant of the "destructionist" theory has been worked out. This starts from the fact that a sacrifice, just as a sacrament, comes under the category of signs, and draws much of its strength from the Catholic doctrine of eucharistic natural concomitance, which is fully ex-

plained in the volume on the *Sacrament of the Eucharist*.

Here is a brief exposition of the theory. In the consecration of the bread, though Christ is made present in his integrity as man and God, yet, so far as the words of consecration—"This is my body"—are operative of themselves, only his body is made present on the altar. The presence of his blood, soul, and divinity, is the effect, not of the words of consecration, but of natural concomitance, the result, that is, of his being a living Person, no longer subject to death or mutilation. Likewise, in the consecration of the wine, the words used are operative of themselves to the extent of making his blood alone to be present, the presence of the other elements of the living Christ being again due to concomitance. The sacramental effect of the twofold consecration, therefore, that is, its effect in so far as it is a sign seen and heard, is the separation of the body from the blood. This, it must be most carefully noted, is not a real separation. It is only a sacramental or symbolical separation. But, it is contended, in the case of a victim who cannot possibly be really immolated or killed, and who is offered in sacrifice, not under his own human form and appearance, but only under the forms and appearances of bread and wine, such a sacramental separation

of body and blood, such a symbolical immolation or killing, is quite enough to constitute a real sacrifice of that victim. It is a real sacramental representation and symbolical re-enactment, in which the same victim is actually present, of the immolation consummated on Calvary, and this fully entitles it to be regarded as a real sacrifice.

There is much to be said for this theory, which has many supporters at the present day. Of all the theories involving some kind of destruction of the victim as a necessary condition, it is certainly the most spiritual in its conception, and the most closely in accord with the theological teaching of St Thomas on transubstantiation.

As the reader will have noticed, all these theories look upon the Last Supper, and therefore, upon the Mass, as a sacrifice complete in itself, though subordinated and relative to the sacrifice of Calvary. But of recent years another opinion has been put forward, and as warmly supported in some quarters as it has been strongly opposed in others, which considers the Last Supper and Calvary as the two component and complementary parts of but one and the same complete sacrifice. At the Last supper, so this opinion has it, Christ as Priest made to God the offering of himself as the victim des-

tined for immolation on Calvary. Thus the sacrifice was begun. This act of oblation continued in being, active and operative, throughout his Passion. The shedding of his blood and his death on the cross sealed and crowned this act of his will, and the sacrifice was thus consummated by this actual and physical immolation of the victim. Now, the only difference between the Mass and the Last Supper is that, while the latter was the offering of the victim who was about to be immolated, the former is the offering of the same victim who has already been immolated. The Last Supper was the ritual oblation looking forward to the future real immolation, the Mass is the ritual oblation looking backwards to the real immolation once for all completed. The Last Supper was the consecration to God of the victim about to suffer, the Mass is the continued presentation to God of the victim who has suffered.

This is an attractive explanation which solves many difficulties and has gained many friends. But it has been hotly attacked, mainly on the ground that it does not fully satisfy all the implications of the Tridentine decrees. As, however, we have no intention of entering into these domestic theological controversies, we cannot discuss the pros and cons of this question.

In common with the other explanations

previously advanced, this one also requires the immolation of the divine victim as a condition for the complete sacrifice, though, differing from them, it does not find any such immolation in the Mass, which it regards as the oblation of the victim already immolated. At the risk of wearying my readers, I must now speak of yet another theory which differs from all these, in that, while recognizing the value of the victim's immolation, it does not look upon it as essential to sacrifice. This explanation considers sacrifice to consist essentially in the ceremonial offering of a gift to God, as an expression or symbol of homage, petition, thanksgiving, repentance and so forth. By offering a gift to God is meant handing it over wholly to him, for his possession, use, and service, while the word *ceremonial* implies that the complete handing over of the gift must be outwardly and suitably expressed. Hence arises the common, though not universal, element of destruction or immolation, since ordinarily nothing expresses so suitably as this, the fact that the gift has passed altogether from man's possession and service into God's.

Now, from the first moment of his Incarnation, Jesus Christ consecrated his manhood to God, giving it wholly into his possession, for his use and service, to do his will in all things, by an act of his human will that was perfect

from the first and irrevocable. Here was the offering of a gift to God, but not yet a sacrifice because not yet a ceremonial offering. He first gave outward and suitable ritual expression to the offering at the Last Supper, when he took bread and wine and spoke the words, This is my body given for you, This is the chalice of my blood shed for you. And so he then offered sacrifice. Again on Calvary, by delivering himself into his enemies' hands and allowing them to shed his blood and take his life, he gave outward and suitable expression to the continuing act of perfect offering, and therefore offered sacrifice. Not another sacrifice, since it is the same offering differently expressed, and the Last Supper and Calvary have a unity of signification. But when he began his glorious life in heaven he did not give up his priesthood, nor did he retract or alter the act by which he consecrated his manhood wholly to God's service; his manhood is still offered and given to God to do his will in all things, it is God's possession. And in every Mass he again gives ceremonial expression to this continuing act in the presentation of his body and blood under the forms of bread and wine, and the words of consecration. Thus the Mass fulfils all the conditions and contains all the elements of a true and real sacrifice. There is no intention of discussing the

merits of this theory, but it may be pointed out that it seems to escape the inconveniences attaching to the view mentioned in *Christ as Priest and Redeemer*,[1] and to satisfy all that is implied in the decrees of Trent as set out above.

Some readers may be surprised and even disturbed by the existence of such a wide diversity of conflicting views on a matter of great importance. It may seem to them that the oneness of faith claimed by the Church as her exclusive possession is not the perfect thing it should be. But, in truth, there is no ground for concern. Examination of the various theories shows that all are based upon the same universally accepted truths. When the Church, in her definitions of doctrine, uses such terms as substance, person, sacrifice, and so forth, she does not, as a rule, intend to give them a strictly determined scientific meaning, but only the meaning they have in the current speech of men of good education. The same word may mean something a little more definite and exact to a philosopher than to the educated man who has not made a special study of philosophy, but in a definition of doctrine the philosopher's extra exactness and definiteness is not included.

So in the present instance, not only do all Catholic theologians accept whole-heartedly the

[1] Vol. XIV of this series. Rev. M. C. D'Arcy, S.J., p. 29.

Tridentine definitions and decrees, but all understand them in the same way as the Council meant them to be understood. Oneness of faith is thus fully safeguarded. Differences begin to show themselves only when theologians, in a legitimate and, generally, praiseworthy endeavour to probe deeper into the recesses of revealed truth, or with the object of showing how one truth exactly fits in with another, or again, with the laudable motive of defending the faith against attack or making it more attractive to the believer and stronger in its appeal to his mind, embark upon the scientific search after and explanation of the how and why of the doctrine. But these differences do not touch the faith. Moreover, every truly Catholic theologian, as soon as he sets out upon these speculations, fully recognizes his constant liability to error; he speaks under correction and in a spirit of humble diffidence, and though he may defend with ardour his own opinions against those of other theologians, he is always ready to give them up should it be proved that their logical outcome would be inconsistent with revealed truth, or should competent authority decide that it is dangerous or imprudent to hold them.

We have now to examine some further questions of importance contained in the Tridentine decrees or arising therefrom.

CHAPTER VI

OF THOSE WHO OFFER THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

THE Council of Trent in the second chapter of the decree set out above states that, in the Mass "the victim is one and the same, the same (person) now offering by the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross." At every Mass, then, Jesus Christ is the High Priest who offers the sacrifice. This is clear from the fact that, as the Fathers are never tired of pointing out, the priest, when he comes to the consecration, the very act of sacrifice, no longer uses his own words, or a prayer composed by men, or even the words of the Evangelist, but Christ's own words, spoken in the first person, "This is my body, this is the chalice of my blood." He speaks these words in the person and power of Christ, and through him Christ speaks and offers the sacrifice. It is not necessary to postulate that, at every Mass that is offered daily, Jesus Christ makes a fresh act of self-oblation, though this is maintained by some theologians. It is quite enough that he should

have made this act once, since, made definitely for once and always, never retracted, it remains for ever operative and effective throughout all time. The practical value and application of this truth will appear later.

But Jesus Christ is not the only one who offers this sacrifice. The Council of Trent says, in the same place, that the Church offers it, through the ministry of priests. Here is a great truth, the consequences of which are often but little understood or realised by the faithful, much to the detriment of their spiritual life. It is the direct outcome of that other great truth that Jesus Christ and all the members of his Church form but one body, of which he is the head. For a full exposition of this teaching readers are referred to *The Mystical Body of Christ*.[1] All that needs now to be said is that the sacrament of Baptism effects a real incorporation with Christ, and in him a real brotherhood with one another; that all thus incorporated, unless separated by mortal sin, are animated and vivified by the same principle of supernatural life, which is his Spirit, the Spirit of charity, the living soul of the Church; and that all, therefore, being in him, and he in them, being branches springing from and attached to the

[1] Rt. Rev. Monsignor Canon E. Myers, M.A., Vol. XIX of this series.

same trunk, share necessarily in the life of the Head, and are united with him in all his priestly work and functions.

Hence when Christ exercises his priestly ministry, and renewing the oblation of his sacrifice, offers it once again in homage to the adorable Trinity, he does not and cannot act alone, but we act with him, all the members of his Church, each according to his own degree of participation in Christ's life and priestly office. Hence the individual priest who celebrates the Mass does not offer the sacrifice as an individual, nor even simply as the minister of Jesus Christ, God and Man, but rather as the minister of Christ, eternal High Priest and inseparable head of his mystical body, the Church, which he wedded to himself through and in the sacrifice of Calvary to be the partner in his eternal priesthood.

The liturgical prayers recited during Mass make it quite clear that it is the whole Church that offers the sacrifice. So, for example, just before the consecration the priest says: "We therefore beseech thee, O Lord, to be appeased, and to receive this offering which we, thy servants, and thy whole household do make unto thee," and then, "This our offering, do thou, O God, vouchsafe in all things to bless, consecrate, approve, make reasonable and acceptable,

that it may become for us the body and blood of thy most beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ." And as a last example take the prayer said immediately after the consecration, when Jesus Christ is now present upon the altar: "Wherefore, O Lord, we thy servants, as also thy holy people, calling to mind the blessed passion of the same Christ, thy Son, our Lord, and also his rising up from hell, and his glorious ascension into heaven, do offer unto thy most excellent majesty of thine own gifts bestowed upon us, a clean victim, a holy victim, a spotless victim, the holy bread of life everlasting, and the chalice of eternal salvation."

In the light of this truth we can understand those words of St Peter: "Be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ . . . but you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people."[1] The Apostle is not using the language of pious hyperbole, or even of metaphor, but of strict and literal truth; all the members of the Church do form a holy and kingly priesthood because they are a purchased people, purchased with the blood that the royal victim shed and the kingly priest offered, and by baptism raised to membership

[1] 1 Peter ii, 5 and 9.

in his body and participation in his priesthood; and, therefore, taking their part with him in the continual offering of his sacrifice. So also St John speaks of "Jesus Christ who . . . hath washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us a kingdom and priests to God and his Father."[1] Whence also it follows that every Mass is pleasing to God and an acceptable sacrifice, not only because it is offered by the spotless High Priest, Jesus Christ, but also because it is offered by the whole Church, in whom the Spirit of holiness always dwells. The unworthiness, even possibly the rank wickedness of the individual priest who celebrates, can neither pollute the victim he offers, nor sully the pure intention and the holy disposition of the sacrificing Church whose minister he is.

But, although the sacrifice is offered by the whole Church in common, it by no means follows that every individual member of the Church has the same part in the offering, or an equal participation in the ministerial office, with regard to every, or indeed, to any Mass that is celebrated, or, we may add (though of this something must be said later), an equal share in the fruits of the Mass.

The priest naturally holds the first place. We are speaking, of course, of the dignity of

[1] Apoc. i, 5-6.

his office and of his official position, not of his personal character or merit, of his personal holiness or the opposite. Whether he be far advanced in sanctity, or but a very ordinary good man, or even if his soul be stained with many grievous sins, his official character and dignity are not affected, nor is his official closeness to Christ, as his immediate minister, lessened. It is through his mouth that Christ speaks, through his actions that Christ becomes present on the altar, in his hands that he is lifted up, through him that the sacrifice and offering of Calvary are re-enacted. Moreover he has been specially chosen, set aside and consecrated to represent the Church, and has been given thereby a very special share in Christ's royal priesthood. Hence many of the prayers at Mass are said by him in the first person, and often he asks God to purify his heart that the offering may be made more worthily. "Brethren," he says, turning to the people, "pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father almighty"; to which the answers comes, "May the Lord receive the sacrifice at thy hands, to the praise and glory of his own name, to our own benefit and to that of all his holy church." And again at the end he prays, "May my worship and bounden duty be pleasing to thee, O holy Trinity; and grant that the sacrifice which I

have offered all unworthy in the sight of thy majesty may be received by thee and win forgiveness from thy mercy for me and for all those for whom I have offered it up."

Next in order to the priest comes the person (or persons) who, by providing the material elements of the sacrifice and making provision for the support of the clergy who offer it, enables it to be offered.

For many centuries it was the custom for the faithful to supply the clergy in kind with all that was necessary for their support and for the exercise of worship. They brought the bread and wine that were used in the sacrifice of the Mass, and other gifts also which were needed by those who, being consecrated to the service of the altar, were forbidden by the Church's law to support themselves by trade and commerce. What was left, after the needs of the clergy were satisfied, was applied to the support of the poor, of whom some were to be found attached to and dependent upon every church. Gradually, as the circumstances of life changed, offerings in money took the place of gifts in kind. Now, in order that Mass may be offered, it is not only necessary that bread and wine should be available, but also that there should be a priest who, as much as anyone else, needs to be fed and clothed and housed. All

therefore who contribute to his support and to the upkeep of the church wherein he ministers, and the sacred vessels and vestments which he uses, and which are necessary for the celebration of Mass, or for its splendour and beauty, or at least its decent and reverent celebration, have a special part in the Masses offered by him.

But with regard to any particular Mass the foremost place among all who share in the offering of it is taken by the one who most directly and immediately provides for its celebration by giving the stipend fixed by custom or law, which is to be reckoned as taking the place of the gifts that used formerly to be made. That they who make these gifts or contribute an equivalent sum, are to be considered as having a real part in the offering of the sacrifice, as being truly co-offerers with the priest, is attested from the earliest times. So we find St Cyprian unbraiding a wealthy but mean woman who came to Mass on Sundays, bringing no offering but receiving Communion. "You come to Mass without a sacrifice, when you take part of the sacrifice which a poor man has offered,"[1] referring in the final words, not to the priest, but to the poor man who had supplied the necessary elements for the sacrifice; while St Gregory the Great speaks of a man "for whom

[1] *De opere et eleemosyna*, c. xv.

on certain days his wife was accustomed to offer sacrifice." [1]

The provision of the necessary elements for the sacrifice confers on the giver a right to the disposal of some part of the fruits of the sacrifice, of which, however, we shall speak later on.

Little more needs to be said on this point. It is evident that those who are present at a Mass following its action and prayers and uniting their intention with that of the priest, and that of the person who has given the stipend, enter into its offering more closely and nearly than the absent, while if there be among these latter any who actually advert to a Mass that is being celebrated and, in spirit, take their stand before the altar, they of course, take a higher place as co-offerers than others who give no thought to it. Those, therefore, who, through illness or some other cause, are prevented from going to Mass on Sundays and holy days, or are excused from attendance, ought to try to be present in spirit, and, if possible, follow the course of the Mass at home so as to have as great a share as possible in its offering and to suffer as little loss as may be from their enforced absence.

Before going on to speak of the fruits of the

[1] *Dialog.*, Bk. IV, c. lvii.

Mass and of the ends for which it is offered, we may say something here of another matter which, though not unimportant, is too often neglected, even by devout and instructed catholics.

This also, just as the foregoing, is a truth that follows directly upon the fact of our incorporation with Jesus Christ, of our being one with him in his mystical body the Church, of which he is the head. As, through this oneness with him, we share in his priesthood and in its exercise, so likewise we are one with him in his rôle of victim, and therefore, in the Mass, when he offers himself and we, sharing his priesthood, offer him, so also he offers us as partners in his victimhood, and we likewise offer ourselves with him. It is well worth while to examine this truth a little more closely and to note some of its consequences and implications.

It is St Paul who, in a phrase as startling as any he ever penned, reveals to us this truth. "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh for his body, which is the church."[1] Were Christ's sufferings, then, incomplete or insufficient? It is not the constant teaching of the sacred Scriptures, repeated by all the Fathers and by all theologians.

[1] Col. i, 24.

that his sufferings were superabundant, and that the least of them would have been more than enough to make full satisfaction for all the sins of the whole human race? Assuredly, but in saying that we have only touched the fringe of the mystery. To stop here is to leave out of account the great truth underlying St Paul's words, the truth of which he never tires, the oneness of Christ the head, and his body the Church, whereby in all things there must be unity and correspondence between his life and hers.

Hence although he paid in full the debt of satisfaction due to the divine Majesty, his members have still to suffer in order that Christ's body may be in harmony with the Head. The Church must live the life of her Head, sharing in his sufferings in order to share in his glory. He has been offered as a victim, and every day he reiterates the offering so that we, his members, may make it with him, and therefore we must also bear our measure of suffering with him, if we wish to be united with him and collaborate in his sacrifice. To live a true Christian and Catholic life involves necessarily some suffering and mortification, such as prayer, fasting, abstinence, purity, the sanctification of Sunday, the avoidance of occasions of sin, without speaking of such special sufferings as sick-

ness, poverty, bereavements and so forth. They who refuse to accept these mortifications refuse to suffer with Christ, refuse to offer sacrifice with his mystical body, and shirk their participation with him in his rôle as victim. On the other hand, they who accept them gladly and generously, thereby fill up in their flesh "those things which are wanting of the sufferings of Christ." "And if one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it,"[1] so since Christ and the Church are one body, when we his members suffer, he suffers with us. Not of course in the sense that he can experience or feel our sufferings, but in so far as he reckons them as his own, since he lives in his members —"I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me"[2] —so that it can truly be said that his Passion will continue until the end of time, so long as there is still one suffering member of his mystical body.

Hanging on the Cross, he looked down the ages and embracing in his outstretched arms all who were to be his brethren, he offered them with himself, their sufferings with his own in full and consummated homage to his Father. And as his prophetic vision is fulfilled in the unrolling of the years, we, his members, offering ourselves with him in the Mass, "fill up those

[1] Cor. xii, 26. [2] Gal. ii, 20.

things that are wanting in the sufferings of Christ." "As the church is the body of this head" (Christ), says St Augustine, "through him she learns to offer herself."[1] His mystical body forms the "universal sacrifice," to use St Augustine's phrase, which the whole Church offers through the High Priest, therefore St Paul beseeches his readers to offer their bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God."[2] The same truth is enshrined in the prayers of the liturgy, wherein the Secret for St Paul of the Cross (April 28th) runs, "May these mysteries of thy passion and death, O Lord, bring upon us that heavenly fervour with which holy Paul, when he offered them up, presented his body as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to thee."

The practical consequences of this truth are clear. We need do no more than point out how important it is that the faithful should join all their sufferings with those of Jesus Christ, in order that, being offered with his, they may become truly sacrifices, being incorporated in and absorbed by the one infinite sacrifice offered by him in praise and satisfaction to God. And so we see again that the Mass is the centre of the Christian life, because in it the whole Church

[1] *City of God*, Bk. X, Ch. xx, *cfr. ibid.*, Ch. vi.

[2] Rom. xii, 1.

and every individual member share with Christ in the exercise of his two highest human activities and offices, in his royal priesthood, and in his victimhood, whereby he redeemed the world.

CHAPTER VII

OF THE ENDS FOR WHICH THE MASS IS OFFERED

TURNING back once more to the decrees of the Council of Trent, we find it laid down in the third Canon that the Mass is not only a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, but also a propitiatory sacrifice, and that it is rightly offered for the living and the dead, for sins, pains, satisfactions and other necessities. And in the second chapter we read that "the holy synod teaches that this sacrifice is truly propitiatory, and that by means thereof this is effected, that we obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid, if we draw nigh unto God, contrite and penitent, with a sincere heart and upright faith, with fear and reverence. For the Lord, appeased by the oblation thereof, and granting the grace and gift of penitence, forgives even heinous crimes and sins. . . . Wherefore, not only for the sins, punishments, satisfactions, and other necessities of the faithful who are living, but also for those who are departed in Christ, and who are not as yet fully purified, it is rightly offered, agreeably to a tradition of the apostles."

It will be noticed that the Council in its decrees lays but little stress upon the Mass as a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, but gives nearly all its attention to its quality and its effects as a sacrifice of propitiation. The reason of this is wholly in the circumstances of the time. The Reformers rejected the Mass but kept a ceremonial celebration of the Lord's Supper, which they were quite ready to call a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. On this point there was no quarrel between them and the Church and therefore the Council, concerned almost wholly with dogmas that were denied or disputed, made but passing mention of it.

But we cannot pass it by so lightly. Praise or adoration of God and thanksgiving to him are man's first and fundamental duty, apart from all question of sin and satisfaction. Adam before he fell was bound to adore God and thank him, and the all-holy Jesus Christ was not, in so far as his human nature is concerned, exempt from his duty. It is an essential condition of the relation between the creature and the Creator, a condition that can never fail or be removed. "The heavens and the earth are full of thy glory," and the life of the angels and saints in heaven is one never-ending act of adoration and praise and thanks.

Also it is clear that we are bound to offer

God the highest adoration and the best thanksgiving of which we are capable and to express them in the most perfect manner possible. And for this end nothing is so well adapted as the offering of sacrifice. As St Thomas puts it: "Since it is natural to man to attain to knowledge through the medium of his senses, and most difficult for him to rise superior to the things of sense, God has provided him with a way of using these things for the commemoration of the things of God, so that, the human mind being incapable of the immediate contemplation of God, his attention may be the better directed towards divine things. For this reason God instituted visible sacrifice, which man offers to him, not because God has any need of them, but so that it may be made manifest to man that he must direct himself and all that he has to God as to his last end, and the creator and ruler and lord of all things."[1] And again, "Among those things that appertain to worship sacrifice holds a place apart . . . for the outward sacrifice is the manifestation of the true inward sacrifice whereby man offers himself to God, as the first cause of his being, as the principle of his activity, and the object of his beatitude."[2]

But no outward or inward sacrifice that mere

[1] *Cont. Gentes*, iii, 119. [2] *Ibid.*, iii, 120.

man can offer is worthy of God, none can give to him the homage that is his right; even were man sinless, the abyss between the finite and the infinite, the creature and the Creator, is too wide for him to bridge. God, indeed, might condescend to accept man's offering, but that would not increase its intrinsic value, or bring it, by a single span, nearer to the infinite standard, which, alone, is the measure of what is owing to him.

But the Mass bridges the gulf. Just as the Incarnation spans the chasm between the human and the divine by uniting manhood with Godhead in oneness of Person, so Christ by taking us into fellowship with himself in his mystical body, the Church, through baptism, and by sharing with us his priesthood, and making us his co-offerers of himself in the Mass, enables us to reach from earth to the highest heavens, to give to God a gift that is worthy of him, and to offer him adoration and thanks that, since they are Christ's and not merely ours, are fully equal to the infinite claims of the divine Majesty. The liturgy gives beautiful expression to this truth when the priest, holding the Blessed Sacrament over the chalice, and making with it a triple sign of the cross, says, "By him, and with him, and in him, is to thee, God the Father almighty, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all

honour and glory." All honour and glory, that is, perfect adoration and praise, because it is his act whose every act, since he is God, is infinite in its moral dignity and worth. Yet it is our act too, for we have our part in his priesthood.

It is for this reason that every Catholic is bound, under pain of mortal sin, unless there be legitimate excuse, to sanctify the Lord's holy day, Sunday, by assisting at Mass. There is no other way in which he can worship God as he should be worshipped, no other way of giving God what is his due, "all honour and glory." Hence wilfully to neglect Mass is not only to fail in duty to God, but is also to rob God, as far as lies in our power, of that perfect homage which is his right.

We have spoken of the Mass mainly as a sacrifice of adoration, but all that has been said applies to it equally in so far as it is a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and there is no need, therefore, to say more on this aspect of it, and we go on to consider it from the point of view of its propitiatory and impetrative character and effects.

Fundamental to the idea of propitiation is the reality of sin, and with this, the realization of guilt. The sinner realizes that he has tres-

passed upon God's sovereign rights and overturned the due and proper order of things, by refusing submission to God and trying to be his own god; for the sinner, in reality, tries to put himself in God's place by making himself his own last end. As long as this subversion of the right moral relation of man to God continues, the divine sovereignty can only be maintained by God's exclusion of man from that intimacy of friendship which, in this life, is called the state of grace, and in the next, the state of glory and happiness in the beatific vision.

We express, imperfectly, this state of things by saying that God is offended with the sinner, or even angry, and that he must be placated or propitiated before he will take him back into friendship. That this way of speaking, which is both scriptural and natural, does not express the whole truth is evident when we remember the continual insistence of Jesus Christ upon God's fatherly love for sinners and his unwearying efforts to win them back. But it does, nevertheless, express a reality. Sin is a subversion of the right moral relation of the creature to his Creator; something real is wrong that must be put right, and until it is put right, the effect upon man, so far as his final destiny is concerned, is the same as if God were really moved

by indignation and anger. For there is opposition of man's will to God's, and where there is not oneness of will there cannot be the intimacy of mutual friendship, there cannot be a life lived in common; and, since God's will must prevail, the effect upon man is exile from him, a life apart and deprivation of the end for which he was made, that is, final failure and consequent eternal misery.

As it is man who, by sin, overthrows the order set up by God, so it is he who must, as far as possible, restore it. By his rebellion he refuses to submit to God, to give himself and all he has and is to God. Therefore, in order to put things right, he must give back what he has withheld, he must make to God the offering of his whole self, mind, will, even life. Being man he feels the need of giving outward expression to this inward act of self-surrender, and this he does by the offering of a gift or victim in sacrifice. God, accepting the penitent sinner's surrender and sacrifice, is said to be thereby propitiated and placated, and receives him again into friendship; and in truth, the subverted order has been really restored, what was wrong has been put right, union of wills has again taken the place of opposition and discord.

This is the merest outline of what is meant by propitiation. For a more adequate explana-

tion we refer the reader to *Christ as Priest and Redeemer*.[1] Herein also it is set forth how, after man had sinned, it was Christ alone, the God-Man, who could make to God the satisfaction and propitiation necessary for the restitution of the order that had been completely overthrown; that he did this by the sacrifice of himself which was consummated on Calvary; and that in virtue of the solidarity that makes of mankind one family in the supernatural order, Christ's personal act is valid for all men, and his merits available for the pardon of all their sins.

But, though available for all, Christ's merits have to be applied to the individual before they can actually profit him, and this application is effected in many ways; firstly, through God's sheer benevolence and mercy whereby he gives man numberless uncovenanted graces, without any action on man's part, and secondly, as an answer to prayer, through the agency of the sacraments, and through the Mass. The Mass, as we have already seen, is a prayer, the highest possible prayer of adoration and thanksgiving, but we are now looking at it from another point of view, we are considering it as a way of bringing God's grace to man by the process of propitiation. That is, we are looking at it

[1] Rev. M. C. D'Arcy, S.J., Vol. XIV of this series.

not as the act of the person or persons offering it, but as a thing which, in itself, has the power of moving God to shower his graces upon us. We are looking at it not as something that we do, but as something that we give to God, by way of compensation or satisfaction for our sins and for which he gives us something in return. And although it is this point of Catholic teaching that the Protestant Reformers and their later followers professed to find so unscriptural and even so shocking, as derogating from the infinite value of the sacrifice of Calvary, it is easy to see that, rightly understood, it contains nothing to offend.

May we, without irreverence, put it thus? Jesus Christ, by his death, opened an account in the bank of heaven into which he poured the infinite riches of his merits, to be used for the relief of all men's needs. Every Mass is a cheque signed by him as Priest and Victim, signed with his own blood, stamped with the Cross, ranking therefore as the presentation anew of his sacrificial death, and therefore entitling the bearer to a share in the riches stored in heaven's treasury. Entitling him, because God, in accepting the High Priest's sacrifice, thereby agreed, and, as it were, bound himself to pay out from the account thus opened whenever it should be presented to him afresh. So far, then,

from derogating from the infinite value of Christ's death, the Catholic teaching, in reality, proclaims and emphasizes it by insisting on the fact that the propitiatory effect of the Mass lies simply in its power of moving God to dispense to men the treasures laid up for them by Christ.

Closely bound up with the propitiatory power of the Mass is its power of impetration or pleading. Here the same principles apply. Jesus Christ "hath an everlasting priesthood, whereby he is able also to save for ever them that come to God by him, always living to make intercession for us,"[1] by presenting himself ever as the immolated victim, and letting his glorious wounds plead that the price he paid may be dispensed with divine generosity to help men in their needs. In every Mass that is offered the divine victim thus stands in sacrificial intercession, and quite apart from the prayers that are sent up by those who surround the altar on earth, the divine victim pleads and is "heard for his reverence."[2]

We have now to ask what is the actual effect produced by the Mass as a sacrifice of propitiation and impetration. What fruits does it produce in men, how and in what measure are they distributed among various classes of recipients, and who, if any, are debarred from sharing in them?

[1] Heb. vii, 24-25. [2] *Ibid.*, v. 7.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FRUITS OF THE SACRIFICE

As the Council of Trent puts it, by means of this sacrifice "we obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid . . . for the Lord, appeased by the oblation thereof, and granting the grace and gift of penitence, forgives even heinous crimes and sins . . . wherefore is it rightly offered, not only for the sins, punishments, satisfactions and other necessities of the faithful who are living, but also for those who are departed in Christ, and who are not as yet fully purified."

We shall deal first with the fruits received by the living.

What must be noticed before anything else, is that the propitiatory action of the sacrifice is very different from the sanctifying action of a sacrament. This acts upon the soul directly and is an efficient cause producing grace in the soul. It is something that we receive, God's instrument or tool, which he uses to engrave his image upon the soul, or if it be already there, to cut its lines deeper and more clearly. Not so the sacrifice. This is something that we give to

God, in exchange for which he gives us a return, grace or the remission of the debt of punishment. Sacrifice acts, not upon the soul, but rather, though the expression be not strictly accurate, upon God; not as an efficient cause, but by way of moral causation, in so far as God, looking upon the gift, his own Son's self-oblation, is thereupon moved to give in return.

What does he give? To answer this question we must begin by pointing out that he does not give directly or immediately forgiveness of sins. As far as mortal sins are concerned, we do not think that any theologian of repute has ever taught that they can be remitted as the direct result of the propitiatory power of the Mass. This effect is produced by the sacraments of baptism and penance, and extra-sacramentally, by an act of perfect contrition; and, by divine ordinance, cannot be produced otherwise. Yet all are agreed, in accordance with the age-long tradition of the Church, and the teaching of the Tridentine decrees, that the propitiatory power of the Mass is a most efficacious agent for obtaining pardon of sin. The Missal is full of allusions to this. Here are but a few examples. "May these sacrifices, O Lord . . . cleanse away our sins"; "Grant . . . that the oblation of this sacrifice may ever purify and protect our frailty from all evil"; "Regard the sacrifices which we offer

thee . . . and by this holy intercourse loosen the bonds of our sins"; "May these offerings . . . unloose the bonds of our wickedness."[1]

These prayers must be understood to mean what they say, and therefore, we cannot follow those theologians who restrict the propitiatory efficacy of the Mass to the obtaining of actual graces by which the sinner is led to true penance and sincere conversion. Before the giving of grace for the sinner's conversion, there is something else to be done. However much we may try to avoid anthropomorphic ways of speaking of God, and however much modern sentimentality may dislike the notion of an angry and irritated God, we must realize and recognize that, at least, the effects of what we call God's anger are real, and we must insist that, in his dealings with man, his justice must be given as prominent a place as his love and mercy. For God is justice as truly as he is love. Now sin is an insult to God, an attempt to dethrone him, a refusal to give him what is his, and divine justice demands that, unless compensation be made or satisfaction given, the sinner be left unbefriended and finally cast off for ever. Jesus Christ made the necessary satisfaction; it is offered to God anew in every Mass,

[1] Secret, 3rd Sun. after Epiph., 4th Sun. after Epiph., Wednes. 2nd week of Lent, Passion Sunday.

and thereby his justice is vindicated, his anger appeased, and instead of punishing the sinner as he deserves, instead of leaving him without help, instead of withholding from him the grace without which return to God is impossible, he looks on him with mercy and showers upon him all those graces which make true penance and conversion not only possible but easy.

A moment's thought will show that the worst punishment that could befall the sinner, in this life, would be God's refusal to give him the grace necessary for repentance. To leave him to himself is tantamount to issuing a sentence of final damnation. But until God's justice be vindicated by some sort of satisfaction offered by that individual sinner, or on his behalf, there can be no positive assurance that the divine mercy will assert itself in his favour and give him the help he so sorely needs. It is here that the propitiatory power of the Mass is exerted; the sacrifice offered for the sinner is the compensation needed, he is brought again within the ambit of God's effective mercy, grace is given to him, repentance becomes possible, and his conversion is now only a matter of his free co-operation with God.

Although we must distinguish in the Mass between propitiation and impetration, we cannot separate these two effects. They run together.

As a sacrifice of propitiation the Mass, by making satisfaction for sin, appeases God's outraged majesty, as a sacrifice of impetration it moves his clemency; by propitiation it ranks the sinner among those who are to be helped, by impetration it causes him to become the actual recipient of help. The formal notions are different, the effect is ultimately and actually one and indivisible.

What has been said of mortal sin applies also, as far as the principles are concerned, to venial sins, to our daily faults, infidelities and negligences. The common opinion of theologians is that these also are forgiven only indirectly by the Mass, just as mortal sins. The reasons are the same, for although these sins do not put the soul into a state of enmity with God, yet they do put obstacles in the way of the free flow of his grace. These obstacles must first be removed before divine grace can work unhindered to lead the soul to that state of penitence and devotion necessary for the remission even of venial sins.

Besides the power of obtaining in this indirect way the pardon of sins, the Mass, as a sacrifice of propitiation, has also the effect of satisfying for temporal punishments which have to be suffered, either in this world or the next, even after the sins have been forgiven. Hence the Council of Trent says that it is offered for

"punishments and satisfactions." The consideration of this effect brings into our survey not only the living, but also the dead, those who have departed "in Christ but are not yet fully purified." But this effect is produced directly. Here we may usefully call again upon the analogy of Jesus Christ's heavenly deposit of treasure, paid over by him in satisfaction for the penal debts of men. In every Mass he now hands in upon the altar a cheque to draw upon this treasure and to use it for the actual remission of punishment justly merited by sinners.

So it is that, from the earliest times, while the Mass has never been offered for martyrs, since it was realized that they were in no need of help, it has always been the custom to offer the holy sacrifice for the rest of the faithful departed, for "it must not be doubted that the departed receive help by the prayers of the Church and the life-giving sacrifice."[1] St Augustine's moving description of his mother Monica's death is well known, and his testimony that her only request to her family was that "everywhere, wherever they might be, they would remember her at the altar,"[2] is a witness both to the antiquity of the practice of offering the Mass for the souls of the dead, and to

[1] St Augustine, Serm. 172. [2] Conf. Bk. IX, Ch. xi.

the firm hold it had upon the minds of the faithful.

Here arises a question of considerable interest, of practical importance and of some difficulty. There can be no doubt that, if we consider the Mass in itself, that is, not as our action who offer it, but as Christ's own body and blood, and sufferings and death, offered and presented anew by him to the Father, its value in the way of propitiation for sins and punishments and satisfactions is truly infinite. This point needs no proof; to anyone who realizes what the Mass is, it is obvious. On the other hand, it is equally clear that the actual effect produced by any one Mass is limited. Otherwise the Church could not allow hundreds of Masses to be offered for one soul in Purgatory. She could not, indeed, allow more than one Mass to be offered for one soul, or in satisfaction for one sin. Whence, therefore, is the limitation?

On this question theologians are divided. Some attribute it to a positive ordinance of God, holding that, for his own good reasons, among which is his desire to encourage the devotion of the faithful, he definitely restricts the effect produced. Little, if any, real support can be found for this opinion, which seems also to be intrinsically improbable when we con-

sider God's loving desire to give all possible help to men; such an arbitrary limitation would seem to contradict all we know of his mercy and clemency.

Most theologians take another line, with St Thomas, and hold that the propitiatory effect of the Mass is proportioned to the devotion of those who offer it. This seems to be not only good theology, but also sound psychology, not to say common sense. For a sacrifice is a gift, and the acceptability of a gift and the recipient's readiness to give in return, although not independent of the intrinsic value of the gift, are more closely related to the giver's dispositions. The widow's mite stands for proof. So with the Mass. Its intrinsic value is infinite and invariable, but the dispositions of those who offer it, their zeal, love, hope, faith, confidence, are capable of almost infinite variations in degree, from the burning ardour of the saint to the grudging coldness of him who gives from motives of formality, routine or human respect. It is only natural, then, that the effect produced by the Mass, whether by way of propitiation or impetration, should fall far below its own objective worth, and have some proportion to the reality and intensity of the dispositions prompting the gift. This is not to say that the fruit produced is merely on a

level with those dispositions; there are good reasons, chief among them the worth of the gift itself, for holding that it far exceeds them, but that there is some true proportion seems to be well established, although it is impossible to say what it is and how exactly it is to be measured. This is God's secret.

When the reader recalls what was said in the previous chapter about Christ being the first and principal offerer of every Mass, he may urge in objection against this teaching the perfection of his dispositions, and conclude therefrom that the Mass must always produce its maximum effect. It must, however be borne in mind that a gift or sacrifice offered in propitiation or satisfaction, must be offered for a particular person or offence. Its efficacy must be directed by an act of the offerer's will towards the special object for which it is offered. Now, as Jesus Christ has given us this sacrifice for our use and benefit, so he leaves to us the power of directing its propitiatory virtue withersoever we will. Though, therefore, the Mass is offered by Christ its special application comes from us, and, hence, its actual propitiatory and satisfactory effect is limited and conditioned by the dispositions of him who makes this application, who gives the gift for this or that special object.

It is hardly necessary to add that, as regards this special fruit of satisfaction and propitiation, the privilege of applying the Mass for any particular object belongs to the person who provides for its celebration, that is, nowadays, who gives the priest a stipend with the request to offer the sacrifice for his intention, and therefore, the priest, having accepted the contract, is bound in strict justice to fulfil it by conforming his intention with that of him who gave.

On one further point there is but little to be said. It is clear that the effect or fruit of the Mass, either as propitiation or satisfaction, is produced with infallible certainty. But, on the other hand, experience shows that the result wished for, as for example, a sinner's conversion, does not always follow. The reason for the failure is, of course, solely in the sinner's refusal to co-operate with the grace God gives him. Man must do his part, and if he will not, even a million Masses cannot convert him. This lack of dispositions cannot exist in the case of the suffering souls in Purgatory, and with them, therefore, the desired effect, whether it be the alleviation of their sufferings, or the shortening of their time of purgation, must infallibly be produced, limited, however, by the conditions already laid down, and also, per-

haps, as many theologians think, by the degree and ardour of charity existing in the soul for whom the Mass is offered. Further speculation on this matter is profitless, for it has no sound foundation in knowledge. All we can do is to rest content with the practice of the Church, and sure that no fraction of the fruits of a Mass offered for a soul in Purgatory can possibly be wasted. God's mercy is our guarantee.

When we ask who, if any, are excluded from receiving the fruits of the Mass, we must first of all make a distinction between the living and the dead. To take the former first, it is clear that as Christ died for all men, and wishes all to be saved, so all can be helped by his sacrifice which, whether as impetration or propitiation, can be offered for all. But the application of this general principle is conditioned by the fact that Jesus Christ instituted the Mass for the Church, to whom alone he gave the right and power of regulating and controlling the application of its fruits. She, therefore, has in the course of time made such rules as seemed necessary, both to ensure that the benefits of the Mass should be as widely diffused as possible, and also, on the other hand, to guard it against any risk of profanation or irreverence, and to avoid the danger of throwing her pearls before swine. This is not the place to examine

these rules in detail; let it be enough to say that the Church encourages her children to be generous in offering the holy sacrifice for the highest needs of all men, whether or no they belong to Christ's body, the visible Church, that they may be saved from the consequences of their sins, and be converted to the true shepherd of their souls.

As far as regards the dead, the lost in hell are, of course, beyond all help. For the same fundamental reason, the blessed in heaven are beyond the need of help. The blessed have reached their last end, the damned have finally failed to reach it; in neither case is any advance possible, any growth in the happiness of the blessed, any lessening of the misery of the lost. We have, therefore, to consider only the suffering souls in purgatory. All need help, all can be helped. But, here again, the practical question is governed rather by positive ecclesiastical law than by general principles. The only point on which there is nowadays any dispute among theologians and canonists, is as to whether a Mass may be offered for an individual soul, who, during life, was not a member of the visible Church. But even those who maintain that this is still forbidden by the Church's law, yet hold that there is good reason for thinking that God, in his mercy, does

not withhold from such a soul any part of the help it would have received if the Mass had been offered for it individually.

Among theologians many other points are disputed concerning the distribution of the fruits of the Mass, and matters of contract and justice arising from the giving of stipends for Masses; but these and others things, being hardly suitable for discussion in such a volume as this, intended for the reader unversed in theological niceties, must be passed over.

CHAPTER IX

SUPPLEMENTARY

APART from the few lines given to the matter in the fifth chapter, nothing has been said about the Communion, although, without a doubt, it is a most important element in the Mass, both in itself, and in its relation to the sacrificial character of the Mass. Nor is it our intention to speak of it at any length now. It is safe to say that the theory advanced, some years ago, by a few theologians, to the effect that the Communion contained the central and essential element of the sacrifice, has met with the fate it deserved, and cannot be seriously entertained. It is now almost universally conceded that the function of the Communion, considered as an integrating element of the sacrifice, is to express man's approach to God and union with him, by becoming a guest at his table, to symbolize the glories and joys of the future life, of which the sacrificial banquet is a figure and anticipation, and to express, likewise, the close union and charity that should unite, as in one family, all who eat of the same

table. This symbolism is common to the sacrificial banquets of all religions. When applied to the Eucharistic Communion it becomes, of course, something very much more than mere and empty symbolism because of the Real Presence, but to deal with this would be to consider the sacramental effects of the Eucharist, which are outside our province and will be treated in another volume.

One or two other points call for brief mention before we close.

In many of the ancient liturgies there is to be found a prayer known as the *epiclesis* or invocation, which, on account of its form and its position, has been a difficulty to many and has led some astray. For whereas it is regularly placed after the words of institution, This is my body, and the rest, it takes the form of a petition to the Holy Trinity, or in many cases, to the Holy Ghost, that by the power of God the bread may become the body of Christ and the wine his blood. Hence arises the question, which are the effective words that act as the instrument of God's power to change the bread into Christ's body, the wine into his blood? The Catholic Church holds definitely that transubstantiation is effected by Christ's words, the words of institution, as is clear from the fact that in the Roman Mass there is no true

epiclesis, and from her rubric directing the priest to kneel and adore the consecrated host as soon as the words of consecration, This is my body, have been said; and consequently, Catholic theologians teach, as we have already said, that the sacrifice in all essentials is complete as soon as the words of institution have been pronounced over the chalice, that is as soon as the twofold consecration of the bread and wine has taken place.

Yet it must be added that, although the words of institution alone are operative in effecting transubstantiation and they alone, therefore, contain and embrace the essential elements of the sacrifice, it must not be inferred that the invocation, or indeed any of the prayers that make up the Canon of the Mass are superfluous or unnecessary. The whole of the Canon is the expression in words and actions of various aspects of the one sacrificial act which takes but a moment of time. But, owing to the very nature of words and gestures, dramatic expression must be extended through time, and the proper time relationship of the momentary act to its outward expression must inevitably be obscured, or even seem to be inverted. What has not yet happened must be spoken of as present, what is past must be expressed as still to come.

SUPPLEMENTARY

The foregoing pages contain but little more than an outline of a subject about which there is an immense and ever-growing volume of literature. Saints, fathers, doctors, theologians, spiritual writers, liturgists, historians have all found, and are continually finding something new to say about the Mass, for in truth the subject is inexhaustible. We have, on the other hand, simply kept to the old, well-worn tracks. After all the highways must be known before the byways can be explored with safety, and indeed, for many, the highways must suffice for all the needs and adventures of life. To those who are still unacquainted with the highways of theology this little book may be useful; to some others it may appeal as a reminder of the days when they first began to set out upon this journey of labours and delights.

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